

City of Auburn, Maine

"Maine's City of Opportunity"

Conservation Commission

PARKS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 25, 2015 – Auburn Hall

Auburn's Conservation Commission Parks Subcommittee met on Wednesday, November 25, 2015. The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm in Auburn Hall by Committee Co-Chair Bob Sipe. Present were Tizz Crowley (Co-Chair), Misty Edgecomb, Larry Pelletier, and Chuck Lafean.

With a correction in the spelling of Mr. Lafean's last name, Chuck Lafean moved to approve the minutes as presented. Tizz Crowley seconded the motion and it was unanimous vote to approve the minutes.

Chair Sipe distributed a copy of the spreadsheet for all city-owned Auburn Parks we've discussed. The report was prepared in a larger format making the information easier to read. The report includes: park name, location, ward, features, athletic facilities, organization, and comments.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the City website and the need for improvements in communications.

It was suggested that the city website feature parks and activities or park features based on the season. As an example, it would be helpful to know about snowshoeing options in parks during the winter. Pictures with narrative might be more eye-catching to the reader and keep the website page(s) fresh.

Although healthy lifestyle is under the authority of recreation and special events advisory committee, the Parks Subcommittee wants to take every opportunity to promote Auburn and her special features including private parks and trails.

It was recommended and unanimously agreed to that the Parks Subcommittee would like to work with the Recreation Advisory group to promote such activities and locations in Auburn.

The Subcommittee discussed the vacancy in Recreation Department leadership with the resignation of Ravi Sharma as Recreation Operations Manager. Tizz reported the City was actively recruiting an experienced Recreation Department Director. The Committee was encouraged to review the job description and position opening post. If a member of the subcommittee had recommendations to add to the information, they would email the City Manager.

Bob reported that he'd used the "Report It" feature on the City website to ask that the parks listing also be linked (or listed) under "residents" as well as the current "visitors" location. The City's reply from was a frowning emoticon. After discussion regarding the importance of having an easy to use, comprehensive website that promotes Auburn, it was recommended that Bob forward his request and the response to the City Manager.

The Committee strongly expressed the need to illustrate the benefits and services available in Auburn- we want to sell our City every page of the website. More information and ease of use was stressed. The Committee unanimously agreed Auburn's website should be on par with Lewiston and Portland's websites. Most of the members felt Lewiston provided much more useful and timely information to their subscribers as compared to Auburn.

Bob reported on the mapping features relating to Parks. He stated that Karen Veilleux was working on this topic and it was a "work in progress". Since the members of the Conservation Commission saw lots of useful and informative information on Parks from Rosemary Mosher, the Committee asks the question- "why does Auburn have two different people working on the same topic for the website" and why is one of these people using Google maps instead of the more detailed Auburn maps. Most members asked "who is responsible for maintaining the city website?" It was reported that "Inform Me" managed the State website and the State was responsible for the content. No one present knew how Auburn is managed. Tizz reported that no one person or department handles the Auburn website- each department manages their own pages and there are limited numbers of people who can post or update web page information. Several members of the Parks subcommittee stress that the City website is very important- especially to people outside our community who make look to come/or consider Auburn. The current website is not meeting the promotion expectation.

Bob reported there was a Go-Fund-Me page for civic projects. He'll follow up with the details.

Missy Edgecomb reported there was a class at Central Maine Community College on playground design. There may be an excellent opportunity for Auburn to use student resources to develop or improve the playgrounds in our parks. She will follow up with CMCC and report back next month.

The Parks Subcommittee discussed the need to have more information about the trail grant program discussed at the last City Council meeting. There was concern that there may be requirements in the grant program that are actually contrary to the goals of parks and open spaces. One example mentioned was a new trail in Lewiston, near CMMC which is now a paved path- that has destroyed the natural setting in a trail through the woods. The committee wants to be sure; there is no damage to the parks or trails due to a grant requirement. It was reported that the Lewiston trail received transportation funding and so was required to be paved.

The members of the Parks Subcommittee clearly have a passion for parks and are looking for more members to join the group. Ideally, we'd find a champion for each City park.

Chuck agreed to champion Mt. Apatite Park. The Committee discussed the various stakeholders and the need to look beyond just land use. Chuck will do some research and reach out to City staff to find additional information, so the Parks Subcommittee can have a plan for Mt. Apatite.

Chuck also reported that his adult son, a resident of Auburn, has a strong interest in skate board parks and would likely champion the needs and proposed solutions for Moulton Park- our only skateboard park in the City. This young man has been skateboarding since he was 6 years old (over 15 years) and has worked on creating and improving skate board park facilities. Chuck will follow up and report on Moulton Park next month. The Parks Subcommittee unanimously approved adding another member of the workgroup if this gentleman would like to formally join us.

There was discussion on who owns the lands abutting several parks- Moulton Park, Barker Mills Trail, Lake Street School, Little Andy river banks.

Bob moved, Chuck seconded and the majority (4-1) voted that Tizz research the history of Moulton Park, including information about Mr. Moulton, where land boundaries are located and if Lewiston-Auburn Railroad owns the park. She is also to find out about the sink hole in the park and plans for repair. Her report will be due at the December 30th Parks Subcommittee workgroup.

The Committee discussed and unanimously agreed that Auburn should have a 10 minute video on each park. This could be part of the first year work plan. Chuck has been having conversations with Joe Gray about using GFTV for promotion of parks.

Chuck reported about a conversation with Dana Little, ALT steward for Mt. Apatite. While a recent trail grant application may include signage, many felt we could work with ALT and get signage up quicker and less costly through collaboration with ALT, snowmobile clubs, and volunteers. The estimated cost would be \$500 in materials. Chuck will follow up with Mr. Little. It was suggested a brief proposal be prepared and submitted to the City Manager, this Committee and the Conservation Commission to garner support for moving forward on better signage at Mt. Apatite.

The Committee discussed the need for a dog park in Auburn. Hopefully it would reduce the amount of dog waste left behind on several city neighborhood streets. Missy Edgecomb volunteered to champion this project and provide an initial update at our next meeting. A dog park will on the agenda. Tizz reported that she had worked on the subject for a dog park for several months a few years ago. She stated that Leroy Walker would be an excellent resource to define the project, location options, materials and costs. One location discussed was at the end of Falcon Drive or at the end of Moulton Park- the other side away from the skate board facilities.

Speaking of Leroy Walker, the Committee wants Leroy to remain an active member of this Subcommittee and would consider moving the meeting day, date if Leroy was able to attend. He currently has a conflict with Wednesday evenings. The last Wednesday of each month seems to work best for all other members of the Committee, but they would move to another day if Leroy would commit to attending. Tizz was asked to speak with Leroy and get some direction. The Committee only meets once a month on the LAST Wednesday of the month at 6:30pm.

Missy brought forth the idea of an Inclusive Playground which provided disabled children to play on the equipment. Tizz added the interest in playground equipment used by Seniors as well. There are not such facilities in the twin cities. Missy will do some research in the next month and update our group on this topic. Tizz will try to find the information she provided the Recreation Dept almost two years ago.

The final subject for the meeting was a review of a draft ordinance for the Parks Advisory Board. A copy of the most recent draft, updated at the last Subcommittee meeting, was distributed. Tizz had provided some additional information for Section 2-457 "Duties". The Committee agreed to review and update the proposed ordinance, paying particular attention to the "duties" section. Any additions, corrections, deletions will be sent by the member to all members of our workgroup no later than

December 23rd. Tizz will include this compiled information in the agenda packet for the December 30th meeting.

Bob reported that the Conservation Commission would likely not hold its regular meeting scheduled for December 15th, but will be at a special meeting with the Planning Board and City Council on December 8th. All members of the Parks Subcommittee are invited to attend the joint meeting and observe. The Parks Subcommittee has been tasked with providing an interim report to the Conservation Commission at their December meeting. The Commissioners present at the Parks session thought we will not report until the regular January meeting on January 19th. It was unanimously agreed that our workgroup will provide the Conservation Commission with copies of the minutes for our three meetings and at our December meeting we will prepare a list of recommendations- most are reported in the minutes.

The Parks Subcommittee voted to continue meeting for the next three months, if the Conservation Commission has no objections, so to complete an action plan. The Parks Subcommittee is unanimous in the recommendation to create a permanent Parks Advisory Board as a standing subcommittee of the Conservation Commission. It would mirror the Community Forest Board work structure but focus on Parks, Cemeteries and Open Spaces. There is a lot of potential and a lot of work relating to Parks- but they are a key economic and community development driver for Auburn. They are tangible evidence of the quality of life offered in our City.

Tizz volunteered to book the room for meetings January through March once she's spoken with Leroy Walker. Chuck will extend an invitation to his adult son to join us.

At 8:10pm, Bob moved to adjourn the meeting, Larry seconded and the vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Tizz E. H. Crowley
Recording secretary for this meeting